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ABSTRACT

Hamilton Terrace in Shreveport, Louisiana, began as the Caddo P.M. School, which was established to provide high school dropouts an opportunity to return to school to complete their diploma requirements. Unlike other evening programs, the P.M. School allowed students to earn real diplomas. It was selected as the best vehicle for providing the kinds of educational services appropriate to the needs of welfare recipients. Hamilton Terrace achieved considerable success in collaboration. It worked with the Office of Family Support and other agencies to provide additional services for students in return for a variety of considerations. Three concerns had to be dealt with if the school were to perform its assigned task adequately--staffing, curriculum, and resources. Each presented a unique set of problems. The following characteristics were sought in staff: a commitment to the welfare of the students and the school's goal of empowering them to turn around their lives; commitment to change; flexibility; and a clearly felt compassion for the population served. These values began to crystallize: a belief in the unlimited potential of every student; rejection of the practice of labeling students; public assistance as a bridge to a better future; a belief in lifelong learning; and belief in the success of all students. Problems with the students were sporadic attendance and lack of child care, personal motivation, and academic skills. Most of the direction for professional growth was from the Thoughtful Education movement. (YLB)

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Education and Welfare Reform: The Story of a Second Chance School

John Baldwin

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JOHN BALDWIN

John Baldwin is principal of Hamilton Terrace Learning Center in Shreveport, Louisiana, a school he developed and opened to provide an "added chance" for students who had dropped out of school or were in jeopardy of dropping out. He previously worked as a classroom teacher, as an assistant principal in two Shreveport high schools, and as business manager of the Louisiana State University at Shreveport International Studies Program.

His work at Hamilton Terrace earned him the recognition of Louisiana High School Principal of the Year for 1991-92. As a result of Hillary Rodham Clinton's visit to his school during the 1992 presidential campaign, Baldwin was named as one of 50 "Faces of Hope" and was invited by the Clintons and Gores to participate in the 1993 inaugural activities. In 1993 he received the Jefferson Award for Public Service in Shreveport.

Baldwin received his B.A. in English from American University and an M.A. in American Studies from the University of London. He and his wife, Marilyn Gibson, have traveled extensively in Europe and the Orient, often leading student groups. Previous articles about his work have appeared in *Educational Leadership, NASSP Bulletin*, and *Exemplary Practices in Education*.

Series Editors, Derek L. Burleson and Donovan R. Walling

Education and Welfare Reform: The Story of a Second-Chance School

by
John Baldwin

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Introduction

Urban educators have long recognized that we face the enormous responsibility of preparing our students for a future in which the demands of a global economy on workers will increase exponentially. Yet we are confronted each day with the profound social dysfunctions of broken families, drug and alcohol abuse, child neglect, deplorable housing conditions, and overextended (or non-existent) health-care delivery systems. We accept from the effective schools movement the axiom that all children can learn, and we draw inspiration from the idealism underlying the vision of the America 2000 goals. At the same time, we face the stark reality that there are, indeed, "savage inequalities," to use Jonathan Kozol's term, in the educational resources that are allotted to poor students. And we watch sadly as thousands and thousands of young people drop out upon reaching the legal school-leaving age. Realistically, many dropouts have no viable economic alternatives; and many of them end up on the nation's welfare rolls.

In an address to the 1993 winter meeting of the National Governors' Association Conference, President Clinton emphasized his determination to change the basic structure of the welfare system, calling for "bold, persistent experimentation" to establish a program that "helps people get on their feet through health care, child care, job training, and ultimately a productive job."

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Arguing that most welfare recipients are "aching for a chance to move from dependence to dignity," the President enumerated four principles that underlie his vision of viable welfare reform:

1. *Welfare should be a second chance, not a way of life*. While many welfare recipients remain on public assistance for two years or less, a significant number actually become resigned to the life of poverty that meager welfare payments guarantee; and they remain on the rolls for eight years or longer.

2. *We need to make work pay*. As the President said, "If there is dignity in all work, there should be dignity for every worker." Unfortunately, many of the jobs available in our economy for typical welfare recipients are marginal in terms of pay, security, and benefits; and this is unlikely to change unless educational levels increase significantly.

3. *We need tougher child-support enforcement*. Partly because welfare regulations prohibit payments to families if there is an able-bodied man in the house, the standard welfare family is headed by a single mother. Sometimes the fathers pay nothing toward the support of their children. More often, they quietly contribute cash, clothing, food, and gifts so that welfare benefits are not reduced. Essentially, regulations intended to prevent abuse of the program have had the effect of breaking up families.

4. *We need to encourage experimentation in the states*. The President acknowledged that the complexity of the whole question of welfare reform could be effectively addressed only if states were given the latitude to attempt a variety of approaches. He even offered to support experimentation with ideas with which he personally disagrees, so long as there is a mechanism to ensure accountability.

That the President has taken such a strong position on this issue is a clear indication of the unpopularity of America's welfare system, especially the component known as Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC). Conservatives resent paying taxes to support the system and often voice the conviction that women have children for

the sole purpose of becoming eligible for or increasing the size of welfare checks. Recipients object to the intrusive eligibility determination process and the constant prying into their personal affairs, which are part of the bureaucratic reviews. And employees of the system feel besieged by both groups for what they essentially consider to be just doing their jobs.

AFDC was conceived as transitional assistance for families economically displaced by events over which they had no control. Husbands and fathers died unexpectedly or deserted wives and children, leaving them with little financial support. The vagaries of the free-enterprise system resulted in periods of recession and high unemployment. Personal catastrophes left parents jobless and unable to support their children. As the role of government expanded, it assumed more and more responsibility for the support of the less fortunate members of society.

In the process, a welfare cycle of dependency developed as large numbers of families came to rely on government support for survival. Instead of transitional support for families facing temporary financial dislocation, welfare became the major source of income for much of America's underclass. A familiar pattern emerged among poor families, with three or four generations of welfare recipients occupying government-subsidized housing and utilizing food stamps and Medicaid to meet essential expenses.

Once disenchantment with such Great Society programs as the War on Poverty set in during the Nixon years, politicians began to focus on welfare as a tempting target for campaign rhetoric. The original philanthropic impulses that gave the program its impetus came to be replaced in the public imagination with such stereotypes as "welfare queens," who unscrupulously (and promiscuously) manipulate the system in order to lead lives of indolent luxury. Ronald Reagan delighted conservative audiences with tales of welfare recipients picking up their checks in chauffeured limousines, and he never tired of attacks on government "waste, fraud, and abuse."

These representations of the welfare system bore little relationship to reality. In fact, most recipients were single mothers deserted by irresponsible fathers and left with few alternatives for survival other than public assistance. In Louisiana in 1990, for example, the typical welfare family consisted of a mother and two children; and 96% of families receiving AFDC payments consisted of no more than four children. The average amount of money paid to such families was $168; and even with the value of food stamps ($182 per month for a family of three) factored in, monthly income for those on public assistance amounted to only 54% of the U.S. poverty guidelines established by the federal government in 1989. That no one would want to remain on welfare under these conditions is abundantly clear. Even in Louisiana's depressed economy, 49% of AFDC clients received benefits for less than 24 months; and 61% claimed assistance for less than 36 months.

Rhetoric, which does not always square with the facts about the welfare system, accords with American political tradition, of course. And as the cult of greed in the Seventies and Eighties replaced the idealism of the Sixties, it became fashionable for politicians such as Ronald Reagan, Pat Robertson, and Jesse Helms to attack the "welfare mess" as the reason Americans had to pay exorbitant taxes.

At the same time, the feeling was growing in the progressive community that welfare was not in the best interests of the clients it was established to serve. Children were not well cared for at the levels of funding that were available through AFDC, and taxpayers clearly were in no mood to increase the funding. The term "welfare state" fell into disrepute, as Americans of all political persuasions came to believe that fresh approaches to the nation's social problems were required. To no one's great surprise, welfare reform advocates agreed that basic changes in the system could take place only if individual recipients received intensive support in preparing themselves to move off public assistance rolls and onto payrolls. As the demands for reform began to influence policy makers in the Reagan Administration

and on Capitol Hill, there was widespread acceptance that basic education constituted the necessary starting point for meaningful reform. From the emergent consensus for change, legislation began to take shape, which ultimately resulted in the passage of Public Law 100-485, popularly referred to as the "Family Support Act of 1988." The stated purpose of this Act was:

> To revise the AFDC program to emphasize work, child support and family benefits, to amend Title IV of the Social Security Act to encourage and assist needy children and parents under the new program to obtain the *education*, training, and employment needed to avoid long-term welfare dependence, and to make other necessary improvements to assure that the new program will be more effective in achieving its objectives. [emphasis added]

As governor of Arkansas at the time, President Clinton had worked closely with Senator Patrick Moynihan of New York to secure passage of this law. And in his address to the governors, Clinton stated, "The bill that's on the books will work, given the right economy and the right kind of support system."

The act was truly comprehensive in its approach to the welfare system, addressing such issues as enforcement of child-support payments, establishment of paternity, child-care provisions, alternative definitions of unemployment, and counseling and services to high-risk teenagers. But central to its intent was the conviction that the majority of welfare recipients would require additional education as a precondition to meaningful employment. Title II of the law, known as the Job Opportunities and Basic Skills (JOBS) Training Program, provided for this additional education and left it to individual states to ensure that participants received services appropriate to the ultimate goal of making them employable.

As regulations for implementation of the new law were promulgated, certain requirements were embedded in the states' plans for this massive change in the welfare system. Welfare recipients were required to develop individual employability plans, normally in

cooperation with a case manager assigned to help them free themselves of the welfare rolls. These plans included both a long-range employment goal and a step-by-step process for achieving that goal. Case managers would assess a number of factors, including the participant's level of education, child-care needs, and requirements for such support services as medical assistance and transportation.

The need for a valid education assessment process and an educational services delivery process quickly became evident. Some state welfare officials recognized that traditional adult education programs already in place could not adequately address the special needs of JOBS participants. The heavy emphasis on self-instruction through workbooks and occasional computer-assisted instruction that characterizes such programs virtually ignores the affective needs of the typical welfare recipient. Furthermore, adult education usually is structured to serve the needs of self-motivated learners and does not maintain the kinds of attendance data that the regulations of the JOBS program demand.

A recent report by the Southport Institute for Policy Analysis concludes that, in general, "the JOBS program clearly does not provide an environment conducive to providing welfare recipients with the basic education services they need" (Chisman and Woodworth 1992, p. 90). This failure, the report states, is a result of structural inadequacies in traditional adult education programs:

> JOBS basic education is a system in which innovation, or even the capacity to innovate, are rare. Despite the apparent bustle, there is an underlying lethargy about most programs – a sense of going through the motions rather than attempting to solve problems by new instructional or administrative designs. Major issues that stand in the way of improving services to JOBS participants are rarely addressed. Most adult educators play a passive role in JOBS: they accept participants into their traditional classes without knowing very much about them or the JOBS program and without assuming the responsibility to accommodate them in any special way. (p. 61)

In the early stages, there was, in fact, no model for the kind of educational program that would adequately serve the new population of students created by the Family Support Act. As Louisiana prepared to implement the new law in 1990, a planning group in Caddo Parish (in the northwest corner of the state, centered on the city of Shreveport) recognized that the law posed an opportunity to devise a new kind of school. Through a collaborative effort by the Office of Family Support and the local school board, the concept of the new school began to take shape; and in January 1991, the Hamilton Terrace Adult Learning Center opened its doors to a lost generation of learners, eager for the second chance that the new school was determined to provide.

By the spring of 1992, the success of the center was evident; and it was one of the 10 programs in the country cited by the National Governors' Association for its "innovative approaches to services for special populations."

In the preface to her NGA report, *Developing Innovative Programs to Support Families*, author Linda McCart makes clear that the programs she chose to include:

> were selected primarily because they represent innovative approaches to helping individuals and families that NGA believes may demonstrate new ways in which bureaucracies can operate and services can be provided. Some of these initiatives can potentially be replicated in other locations, taking into consideration the special needs of individual communities. Most important, NGA believes that the selected projects have the potential to make a difference in the lives of individuals and families. (p. vi)

On 5 March 1992, Hillary Rodham Clinton visited Hamilton Terrace during a campaign swing prior to the "Super Tuesday" presidential primary. After spending just over an hour touring classes and talking with students and teachers, she commented to the local press, "This school really exemplifies the kind of comprehensive approach that Bill is stressing in his campaign. If we give people education, train-

ing, and opportunity, they will be able to move to self-sufficiency and independence."

This fastback is the story of the evolution of Hamilton Terrace Adult Learning Center and, more importantly, of the promise of welfare reform to our students, one of whom recently wrote:

> The second chance to come back and get a diploma is like being reborn all over again. When I first thought about coming back I was scared because I had been out of school too long; I thought I didn't know enough to participate with the rest of the class. But when I got in the classroom, I found that the classes are well-organized, they are not that crowded, and there is plenty of help from the teacher. Every day I learn something in each class. I like the flexibility of having to come only two days a week. Since I have a daughter with severe asthma, this makes it possible for me to continue my education.

Much of the history of American education has been the story of the economic, social, and political enfranchisement of the least fortunate members of our society, of helping them to be "reborn all over again." Yet our schools have failed in their mission to eradicate the urban underclass. Hamilton Terrace is consciously dedicated to this cause, and we believe that we are discovering the processes that eventually will guarantee equal access to the mainstream of our society for all students.

The Origin of Hamilton Terrace

In the fall of 1989, I returned from a sabbatical leave at the University of London to my job with the Caddo Parish School Board. I previously had served as a classroom teacher and assistant principal at one of the urban comprehensive schools that serve many of Shreveport's minority students. In those positions I had become deeply disturbed by the apparent insensitivity of many educators and civic leaders to the fact that enormous numbers of poor black students were leaving the system prior to graduating from high school.

Thus, when the director of personnel offered me a position with the Caddo P.M. School, I accepted enthusiastically, believing that I would have the autonomy and resources to create a different kind of educational program, one that would address the real needs of inner-city students. The P.M. School (operating in the evening from 5:00 until 9:00) had been established to provide high school dropouts an opportunity to return to school to complete their diploma requirements. Classes were organized in two-hour time blocks and met twice a week on Mondays and Wednesdays or on Tuesdays and Thursdays. Because of a waiver from the state department of education, the school was permitted to grant Carnegie units for such classes; and there was tremendous flexibility in student scheduling.

Unlike other evening programs, the P.M. School allowed students to earn "real" diplomas, rather than GEDs, which increasingly are considered inferior credentials in the business community and which

no longer are accepted in most branches of the Armed Services. The school was in many ways an excellent vehicle for experimentation with instructional innovation, operating as it did at a time when school system bureaucrats had left their offices for the day. Furthermore, from a public relations standpoint, we were highly regarded for serving a population for whom any success was considered a major improvement by local education officials.

However, the number of students being served was small and funding was precarious. I, therefore, set as my first goal the expansion of the school's services and a search for additional resources.

Fortuitously, I learned that an old friend from undergraduate days had moved to Shreveport after an absence of 15 years and that she was the regional director of the Office of Family Support, the welfare office. Following a telephone conversation in the fall of 1989, she paid a visit to the school. From that visit, I learned that welfare reform was on the horizon and that she had played a central role in developing the case-management model that Louisiana would use to implement the new law. One component of the law, which presented obstacles to implementation, was the basic education requirement.

My friend was convinced that a high school diploma was superior to a GED, and she was persuaded by the end of her visit that the P.M. School could be the beginning of an adult comprehensive high school for welfare recipients. Her primary concern was that the hours of operation would prevent welfare mothers from being at home during the evening, when their children would most benefit from parental contact and guidance. So she and I began to discuss the possibilities of reorganizing the school to include daytime classes as well.

According to early estimates, as many as 800 of the approximately 3,500 welfare recipients in the metropolitan area would eventually require basic educational services. Additionally, it was inevitable that new cases would be added to the welfare rolls even as welfare reform proceeded. In order to serve such a large number, the school system clearly needed to expand programs already in place. After

exploring a number of options, the superintendent and the assistant superintendent for instruction agreed that the P.M. School was the best vehicle for providing the kinds of educational services appropriate to the needs of AFDC clients; and I was authorized to begin planning the program.

This planning did not proceed in a logical, sequential order. Quite the contrary, so many details had to be attended to that we typically worked on several of them at once, keeping in mind that everything had to be ready to go by 1 October 1990.

The first major hurdle was the negotiation of a contract between the Office of Family Support and the Caddo Parish School Board. Fortunately, the school system's director of research had written a large number of grant requests; and working with the board attorney, she was able to prepare a proposal for the Office of Family Support, which eventually resulted in generous funding for the initiation of the program.

Inter-Agency Collaboration

Collaboration across service agencies is an issue that is beginning to receive attention from policy makers, as well as in the professional literature. Logically, it seems sensible to create a "seamless web" of services by encouraging government bureaucracies that share common clients to work together to achieve desired goals. And schools are logical sites for the development of "one-stop shops" for social services, located as they are within communities in which citizens most in need of such help reside.

In dollar terms, such collaboration maximizes the effect of limited resources. Even more important, however, it makes the help that is available far more accessible than is currently the case in communities where each agency operates in splendid isolation and where jealousy and turf wars more often characterize bureaucratic behavior than does cooperation.

At Hamilton Terrace we have achieved considerable success in collaboration. Our relationship with the Office of Family Support has been particularly productive, primarily because both organizations agreed from the beginning on a common set of values regarding social issues. This permitted us to transcend the kinds of inter-agency rivalry that often inhibit cooperation. The result has been a "win-win" program in which the school receives additional resources and the welfare office has access to a high-quality urban education for its clients. Because we have pooled our expertise in securing the fund-

ing and staffing, we have created an environment that ultimately has benefited the population we are committed to serving.

Beyond this arrangement, which facilitated the initiation of our program, the school has worked with other agencies to provide additional services for our students in return for a variety of considerations. For example, the metropolitan transportation agency (Sportran) created a new monthly bus pass that allows unlimited transportation for pass holders. The welfare office pays $28 for each such pass so that students have a way to get to school, and the city receives additional and much-needed revenue for bus routes it must operate anyway.

Head Start and Child Care Services of Northwest Louisiana operate on-site classes in rooms we provide rent-free. The school system's Food Service Division, whose funding is contingent on the number of meals served each day, provides breakfast and lunch daily, thus allowing our students (almost all of whom qualify for free meals) to stretch the purchasing power of their food stamps.

For the principal who seeks out collaboration with other agencies, the rewards can be tremendous. The additional resources available to schools through collaboration increase services to students significantly. However, much time is required to negotiate agreements, soothe hurt feelings, and persuade reluctant potential partners that they will in fact benefit from such relationships. Administrators considering such a move should be forewarned about this major commitment of time. They also should understand that once the commitment is made, it is permanent.

In the early days of the program, it was fairly routine for case managers to refer welfare recipients to Hamilton Terrace, where a counselor would review their previous high school record and determine their appropriate placement in classes. The primary concern of most students was to complete their graduation requirements as quickly as possible, and schedules were devised with this priority in mind. Unfortunately, the case managers were not familiar with the intricacies of the process; and when they were questioned by officials in the

Department of Social Services about participants' progress through their educational plans, they were unable to respond with any precision.

As a result, we spent quite a bit of time in staff meetings explaining Carnegie units, prerequisites, time requirements, exit examinations, and all the other minutiae that come naturally to school employees but which bewilder normal human beings. We also had to explain that while graduation in Louisiana required a certain amount of clock time, it did not require any minimum level of knowledge until very recently.

Such information was very revealing to the staff of the welfare office, but internalizing it required tremendous effort. In retrospect, however, I am convinced that the investment of time, which collaboration consumed, was ultimately worthwhile and was essential to our success. It eliminated our most pressing initial problem – start-up costs for a new kind of urban school.

Other problems existed, of course, not the least of which was locating a physical setting. The Caddo P.M. School was located in Fair Park High School, which housed more than 1,000 students during regular school hours. The only school board property not in use was Hamilton Terrace, a former middle school in the center of town, which had been closed several years earlier because of white flight and dwindling enrollment. Over the years, several proposals for the building had been advanced; but it was generally agreed that the physical condition would require a tremendous investment of money, a scarce commodity indeed in the Caddo Parish school system. Nevertheless, we were able to gain initial entrance into the building by promising the parish director of school plants that we would confine our activities to the ground floor, using only four classrooms and the office suite.

The building was essentially empty, its furniture having been distributed to other schools throughout the system. Starting with borrowed surplus inventory from the welfare office, we opened early in September of 1990 and began planning for a two-step phase-in of

the adult high school we envisioned. Step one involved assessment of each participant's level of education.

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Recruiting and Assessing Students

The Family Support Act contains no definition of basic education; but the regulations that govern its implementation establish a high school diploma, its equivalent (the GED), or a literacy level of 8.9 as the minimum education that will fulfill the law's requirements. More education may be required of participants, however, if the local employment market demands job applicants to be better qualified than the level of 8.9.

Educators, of course, realize that something like 8.9 is a meaningless measure. Different tests will show different results, and it is easy to coach a student to a minimum performance level on any test without any confidence that the student has an adequate educational foundation. We debated for some time which test would best serve our purposes. The CAT, WRAT, and Schlossen all were considered and rejected for a variety of reasons. We purchased a sophisticated computer laboratory, which included an assessment process as a part of its computer-assisted instruction program; but we decided that the assessment it offered was too contingent on exposure to its program to be really valid. In debating the various merits and weaknesses of respective tests, we became especially sensitive to the damage that could be done to a student's self-esteem if she learned that, despite being an adult, she was reading at the second- or third-grade level. Indeed, we found more problems than solutions in the whole question of assessment. Finally, we determined that we would use the Test

of Adult Basic Education (TABE) on the ground that many of our students planned to continue their education at the local Technical Institute, which uses this instrument as its admissions and sorting tool.

By October of 1990, we were ensconced in a building. A counselor was employed to begin to enroll students following a search of their previous academic records and the administration of the TABE.

This was no small task, because the state had given us permission to allow students to graduate based on the requirements that were in place at the time that they entered the ninth grade. In Louisiana, state requirements for graduation have changed numerous times, as the pendulum has swung between emphasis on vocational preparation at one extreme and heavy concentration on rigorous academic courses at the other. Each entering student, therefore, triggered a tedious records search to determine which set of requirements she would be expected to meet in order to graduate.

Given the amount of work that was necessary to develop a curriculum for our students, we reached an agreement with the Office of Family Services to begin actual classes at the start of the spring semester in January 1991. This gave us time to continue with our program planning throughout the autumn, while the counselor met individually with prospective students to plan their programs of study. As the starting date for actual classes approached, three central concerns emerged that I had to deal with if the school were to perform its assigned task adequately – staffing, curriculum, and resources. Each of these presented a unique set of problems.

Staffing at Hamilton Terrace

Teachers at the Caddo P.M. School were regular teachers who augmented their salaries with part-time work in the evening. This presented a number of problems, foremost of which were simple physical fatigue after teaching all day and a lack of time to meet as a faculty to plan for overall school improvement. As a result, there were programmatic deficiencies in the school, which I could not correct given the structural realities we faced.

The opening of a daytime program at Hamilton Terrace offered me the opportunity to hire an entire school staff and to establish the ethos of the school in the process. Unfortunately, the fact that I needed staff in the middle of the academic year severely limited the pool of available applicants. Still, there were many teachers in the school system who were looking for an opportunity to work in a non-traditional environment; and I was able to assemble an initial core of committed professionals willing to join in an effort to change the directions of our students' lives. Augmenting these full-time teachers were several retirees who signed on for part-time employment and brought to the school a tremendous reservoir of energy and experience.

We opened with teachers of the core areas – English, math, science, and social studies – along with elective offerings in reading, home economics, and business education. Soon after opening, we added courses in physical education and art. As I interviewed prospective faculty members, I looked for a number of characteristics.

Above all, I asked for a commitment to the welfare of the students and the school's goal of empowering each of them to make a dramatic turn-around in their lives. This was a major departure from the traditional classroom, where each teacher had his or her distinct role in the assembly-line production of the ultimate graduate.

We did not see our role as adding our own little bit of expertise to a student's store of knowledge; instead, we were to accept responsibility for charting the future of everyone who came through our doors. Several applicants for teaching positions listened respectfully to this charge and decided that it was more than they were willing to undertake. The teachers who eventually were hired understood from the beginning that they would be expected to make major changes in standard pedagogical practices.

Validation of these teachers' success comes from the comments I have received from students at Hamilton Terrace about their treatment by the teachers. Following is a sampling of the many compliments students have paid the staff here:

"The reason I feel that I can get a good education here is because I could relate to my teachers a lot better than I did at my other high school. The teachers at Hamilton Terrace have a better way of pointing out the basic things you need to know in life, and I relate to that a whole lot better."

"I have learned so much more at Hamilton Terrace than when I was in high school. The teachers are a whole lot of help to me; they make me feel like coming and learning. If I had these teachers when I was going to high school before, I would have never dropped out. The teachers encourage their students to come to school every day to learn."

"The teachers I met up here act their age and talk to you with respect; something you can't find in many high schools."

"No matter what your reason is for being here, you're accepted with a chance at a new life with a new start."

This commitment to change by the teachers presumed a second characteristic, which I sought when recruiting faculty at Hamilton Ter-

race – flexibility. Realizing that all our students had been dropouts or were potential dropouts, the staff had to be prepared to make whatever adjustments were necessary to ensure that these students succeeded in this educational setting.

While it was true that the welfare office would retain major leverage over our students, given that their benefits were subject to reduction or elimination if they failed, we knew we could not succeed with these students without first convincing them of our genuine interest in them as individuals and of our conviction that all of them could learn. If we expected these students to accept the importance of the work they would be doing, then the environment would have to be supportive, not threatening. For teachers accustomed to working in the typical secondary classroom, this was to be a major change.

Since many of the staff had been trained to work with a different kind of student and had to comply with an entirely different set of expectations relative to upholding standards or maintaining school traditions, ensuring success for all our students would require a transformation in how they functioned in the classroom. Such a transformation could not occur unless teachers participated in meaningful staff development; I realized from the beginning that, as principal, I would be responsible for providing this staff development. In return, I expected them to be willing to re-examine all of their previous assumptions about teaching and learning.

A final criterion I sought in teachers was a clearly felt compassion for the population we would be serving. Sadly, there are many people, including some in the teaching profession, who believe that welfare recipients bring their troubles on themselves through slovenliness and promiscuity. To expect such teachers to contribute to the development of a genuinely supportive environment for our students would be wholly unrealistic. Thus, as I interviewed applicants, I encouraged all of them to speak freely and to express any opinions they held about the whole question of public relief. The depth of prejudice against poor people evident in some of these interviews frankly disturbed me. It was not hard to eliminate these from my list of applicants.

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Shared Values at Hamilton Terrace

Once a committed and talented staff was assembled, the school's institutional values began to crystallize. Because we perceived ourselves as starting a new school from scratch, we examined much that had been thought and written about schools' shared values; and we agreed on the following:

A belief in the unlimited potential of every student. President Clinton is fond of asserting that the United States does not have a single individual to waste; yet, many of our schools act as if only the best and the brightest are worth educating. Hamilton Terrace is committed to developing every student, not just those who are easy to teach.

Rejection of the practice of labeling students. There are no reliable predictors of potential student accomplishment. We therefore value every learner for his or her strengths and consider weaknesses to be challenges.

Public assistance is a bridge to a better future, not a permanent lifestyle. Anyone can encounter circumstances that result in temporary financial setbacks. It is our charge to help those who have encountered such setbacks to find ways of reordering their lives in productive and meaningful ways.

There is no inappropriate age for starting the educational process; it must involve the whole family. Some educators mistakenly assume that education can be effective only if it begins in early childhood. At the same time, early childhood educators insist on the central sig-

nificance of effective parenting. We believe that everyone is a lifelong learner and that the age of our students must not be allowed to interfere with their right to lifelong learning.

Students do not fail schools; schools fail students. Too often, the concept of high expectations is misinterpreted to mean that students who do not meet some predetermined standard are themselves responsible for their failure. We believe that it is the responsibility of the school to find ways to ensure that students will succeed.

From these explicitly stated values emerged a set of commonly agreed-on expectations.

First, it is expected that every student will succeed, provided that the school promotes success as its primary goal.

Second, the setting in which such success is most likely to occur is a cooperative one.

Third, as students perceive that their academic skills are becoming stronger, they will begin to have a heightened sense of self-esteem.

Fourth, as educational levels rise, students will become increasingly independent of government support and will simultaneously recognize the necessity of human interdependence.

And finally, students will exit from Hamilton Terrace adequately prepared for further learning or gainful employment.

Employing an exemplary staff was only the beginning of the realization of our values and expectations. We faced, from the beginning, the very vexing question of what constituted the appropriate curriculum for our students. Aside from the issue of state mandates, which lent a stultifying rigidity to many of our discussions, we seriously debated the arguments of those who thought fairly specific vocational education would speed up the transfer from welfare to work and of those who believed – at least in the early stages – that it was better to take as much time as we needed to guarantee that our students had a sound, basic education. This second position struck me as particularly valid, given that there are so few jobs available in the local economy anyway.

The Student Body

From the outset, the staff at Hamilton Terrace have been struck by both the economic desperation of our students and their determination to succeed academically as a first step toward a better life for themselves and their children. We had, quite frankly, anticipated some resentment from students on being forced to return to school; so we prepared ourselves to counter this by providing an upbeat, positive environment. Instead, we soon learned that the students were sincerely appreciative of the "second chance" the school offered, although they also were suspicious that, like so many well-meaning social programs they had seen before, it probably would not last very long. Many of them harbored a deep distrust of "the system," based on previous experiences, which left them feeling essentially powerless in the face of an apparently uncaring bureaucracy.

Among the early problems we encountered were sporadic attendance and a lack of reliable child-care provisions for the children of our students. Not surprisingly, the two turned out to be closely related. Absenteeism at school would be especially high on days when children were sick or when regular child-care arrangements did not materialize. Because the Family Support Act provides money for child care, we felt that we could best solve both problems if we could find a way to offer on-site child care at the school. We also envisioned developing a center that would encourage parents and children to learn together, joining each other for lunch and perhaps reading stories together afterward.

What we did not reckon with initially were the state regulations governing child-care centers. Louisiana has a two-tier system of licensure (Class A and Class B), but only those centers that meet the more stringent Class A requirements can qualify for the federal payments funded by the welfare reform legislation.

We soon learned that structural changes in the building would be required for us to operate legally (which we clearly wished to do). From the day that we decided to go ahead with the installation of low-profile toilets and individual hot water heaters, it was clear that the business of securing a license would be one of the major hurdles we faced in providing appropriate child-care services to our students.

Ultimately, we subcontracted the entire child-care program to a non-profit organization, Child Care Services of Northwest Louisiana; and only in this way were we finally able to open a center for infants and toddlers aged thee months through three years. Soon thereafter, the local Community Action Agency opened a Head Start class on campus for four- and five-year-olds, enriching it at our behest with Montessori teaching techniques.

Unfortunately, the opening of the child-care facilities did not end our students' irregular attendance; and this problem continues to bedevil us even now. We have tried a number of strategies to resolve this issue, but none of them has yet been wholly successful. What we have learned is that our students want to be in school every day, but many of them face personal circumstances that make this all but impossible.

A recent survey of students indicated that the two primary reasons for absenteeism are personal illness and illness of children. In an attempt to address this problem, a team of teachers and welfare office employees has recently completed a short course in Total Quality Management, which focused on problem solving. As a class project, they decided to experiment with methods of improving student attendance at Hamilton Terrace. Working with two local medical centers – one state-supported and the other private but non-profit – the team

is in the process of securing the necessary resources to open a school-based health clinic.

There is, however, a second factor involved in the attendance issue. Some students lack the personal motivation to come to school every day and find it especially difficult to arrive on time. Thus our quality management team sought ways to reward regular on-time attendance. They were guided by an experience the staff had with students during the fall of 1991.

One of our teachers suggested in a faculty meeting that, as a school, we should seek ways to help our students provide a modicum of Christmas joy for their families that winter. Recognizing the limited financial resources at their disposal, this teacher recommended that we solicit contributions from the community to be distributed to students prior to the beginning of Christmas break. Faculty members themselves contributed clothing, jewelry, and many other appropriate gift items; and they begged local businesses to match their generosity.

We were soon overwhelmed with gifts, and the major problem became the logistics of distributing them to students. In addition to the simple logistical question, there was the matter of equity. Clearly, some students were more deserving than others by virtue of need; but we had no reliable way of determining who these students were. Ultimately, we hit upon the idea of a token economy, with students being given scrip with which they could "purchase" items for themselves and their families. The scrip could be earned in a variety of ways, but the primary emphasis was on attendance. As a result, attendance between the Thanksgiving and Christmas holidays was the best of the entire year.

Convinced by this experience that extrinsic rewards could exert a powerful influence on students, the quality management team suggested setting up a schoolwide token economy year round. We printed Morning Attendance Recognition Certificates (MARCs), which students may redeem in a school store stocked with a variety of goods that the students themselves requested in a survey. Early indications

are that on-time attendance has improved marginally as a result of this program, and we hope to see even more improvement as students come to understand how the program functions.

In addition to serious problems with attendance, many of our students lack the academic skills normally expected in high school. Because of generous equipment and materials budgets, we have been able to purchase state-of-the-art computer labs and a wide range of up-to-date teaching aids, including current textbooks and consumables for all classes, fully equipped classrooms for such hands-on subjects as science and home economics, and a wide range of videotapes. Every classroom contains a television, VCR, and cable television connection; and teachers are encouraged to identify and purchase other materials that will strengthen their programs.

However, we have tried to resist the temptation to provide "remedial" learning experiences, preferring instead to look for the strengths students bring to the school and attempt to build on them within a context that has meaning for each student. This has resulted in a schoolwide effort emphasizing enrichment and acceleration in areas of relevance to students' personal lives. In many cases, this requires direct and explicit instruction in such areas as effective parenting, physical safety issues, access to public services, healthy lifestyles, and support of children's learning. All these topics are particularly relevant to our students and provide useful instructional "hooks" for student involvement in classroom pursuits. Our insistence that every student be successful has resulted in major changes in the lives of many of them.

One student took time to send me the following impressions of the school as she was preparing to graduate:

> The children in the many schools I have attended in Los Angeles, California, and here in Shreveport, Louisiana, didn't like me. To my knowledge, my family didn't either. I was known as the black sheep, all alone and at that time not knowing anyone to turn to. My school life was very alone and sad. At that time I didn't know that the teachers

were there for educational and personal problems. . . . It took me 15 years to realize that there are people who really care what happens to me. Dealing with the staff here at Hamilton Terrace, I have learned a great deal about myself. I'm now 30 years old with two boys, Dean, 8, and Willie, 6, soon to be seven. The teachers showed that they care for me as a person and not just someone dumb for dropping out of high school no matter what the reason. I feel as though there's nothing I can't go and talk to them about. . . . To me the staff is a very warm, close-knit family always wanting to help. I'm so glad the school was created in order to help the adults that couldn't help themselves in education.

Another wrote of the improvement in her self-esteem as a result of returning to school:

I like attending Hamilton Terrace very much. It has given me a second chance at my education. If it wasn't for the school I probably would be at home watching T.V. all day long with nothing else to do. Coming to school has made me feel better about myself, knowing that one day I will have my diploma and can go on to bigger and better things.

With a current enrollment of more than 600, Hamilton Terrace is attempting to create a school environment in an urban setting that successfully serves the needs of students who have previously experienced repeated school failure. Given the continuing growth in the school's population and the increasing size of its graduating classes (63 in 1991, 91 in 1992, 106 in 1993), we are convinced that we are well on our way to fulfilling this mission.

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Staff Development

While flexibility was a central criterion in staff selection, I never doubted that a continuing program of staff development would be essential to the school's success. Having served as an assistant principal for instruction for many years, I had participated in a number of training programs, many of which offered insights and guidance as I planned for the opening of the new school. From Madeleine Hunter, I emphasized the importance of structured lessons with clear goals. From effective schools research and *TESA* (Teacher Expectations and Student Achievement), the significance of high expectations emerged. From the research on thinking, various ways of engaging students more fully in learning became evident. From learning styles research, respect for individual differences became a central organizing principle of our work. But there was no single "package" that would serve all the needs of this unique experiment we were about to conduct at Hamilton Terrace.

In lieu of such a package, as a staff we agreed on an approach that avoided traditional diagnostic evaluations of students in favor of pushing them all to the upper limits of their abilities, wherever those might lie. This required instructional techniques that were democratic rather than hierarchical. But it was from the Thoughtful Education movement that we drew most of our direction for professional growth.

Thoughtful Education is an outgrowth of the model of learning styles based on the work of Swiss psychiatrist and psychologist Carl Jung.

A number of educational consultants have used an application of this model for schools; and after considering several of them, we engaged the services of Richard Strong, a New Yorker, who bonds easily with teachers because he speaks the concrete language of the everyday classroom and never strays into the stratosphere of academic theorizing.

As a result of Strong's training, our teachers became sensitive to differences in learners' perceptual and interpretive strengths; and they began to talk not of trouble-makers or slow learners but rather of "Sensing Feelers" and "Intuitive Thinkers." The psychoanalytic model that underlies this work posits four learning styles, which can be summarized as follows:

Sensing Thinkers perceive information through the senses (sight, smell, touch, sound) and process it by thinking about it. Their preferred method of learning is mastery/memorization, and they like tasks with clearly identifiable right and wrong answers.

Intuitive Thinkers perceive information through patterns and abstract relationships and also process it by thinking about it. Their preferred method of learning is understanding, and they like tasks that allow them to argue with authority and demand substantiation.

Intuitive Feelers perceive information intuitively and process it through their emotions. They follow their own interests, envision possibilities, and like instructional tasks that allow them to be creative and to synthesize information.

Sensing Feelers perceive information through the senses and process it emotionally. They are strongly attached to other people, constantly seek harmony among competing groups, and need to feel that they belong. They prefer tasks that allow them to work in groups.

In order to determine the preferences of our students, we administered the Learning Preference Inventory to each of them. Not surprisingly, a disproportionate number turned out to be Sensing Feelers. This alerted the faculty to devise teaching strategies that would allow these students to begin to experience success in learning. The

fact that our students liked to work together led us to conclude that cooperative learning tasks would be most appropriate for them. The professional literature on cooperative learning began to play a central role in staff-development sessions.

This change did not occur easily. Some teachers (especially at the high school level) resist cooperative learning on various grounds: that it does not "look" serious enough, that there is no individual accountability, that weak students ride the coattails of stronger students and that stronger students resent this, and that it does not really prepare students adequately for the environment they are likely to face in college. One very traditional teacher, who chose not to return to Hamilton Terrace after the first two years, commented, "Cooperative learning is nothing new; we used to call it cheating!" Still, most of the teachers experimented tentatively with some of the cooperative strategies we learned (Reciprocal Learning, Teams Games Tournaments, Jigsaw, etc.) and were impressed by the students' receptivity and growth.

In addition to making students comfortable in a learning environment, educators also realize that they have a countervailing responsibility to challenge students to succeed in less comfortable settings. Thus, we also seek to stretch students into other learning styles on a regular basis. Our goal is that students feel comfortable and successful approximately 75% to 80% of the time and that they feel challenged (though not to the point of frustration) the other 20% to 25%. Clearly, this balance is difficult to achieve and has been frustrating even for our most accomplished staff members.

Beyond the substantive accomplishments of our staff-development program, there have been very important side effects. Many teachers report that they feel valued as professionals for the first time in their careers, that they appreciate the opportunity to have input into decisions that affect their work environment. The full day of collegial work each Friday, when students are not in attendance, allows them to learn what is going on in other classrooms and departments and

has drastically reduced the sense of isolation that characterizes teaching in so many secondary schools.

Perhaps the most important result of the staff-development work, however, has been a shared willingness by the entire staff to be accountable for instructional outcomes. Each month, departments agree on specific goals, competencies, and tasks for all students. During January 1993, for example, the following were agreed to by the teachers.

Science

Competency: Students will work together cooperatively to complete a task of high validity, and the group will be full of good feeling.

Goal: The learner will read and follow instructions in sequential order and draw logical conclusions from given material.

Tasks: Perform a "Black Box" experiment. Complete Exxon Energy Cube activities.

Math

Competency: Students will work together cooperatively to complete a task of high validity, and the group will be full of good feeling.

Goal: The learner will calculate percentages, think critically, visualize realistic numbers, and participate in projects.

Task: Complete a waiter/patron restaurant activity calculating the bill, tax, gratuity, and total.

Social Studies

Competency: Students will think complexly, gather and evaluate information, and present evidence and reasons to construct a valid argument.

Goal: The learner will distinguish fact from propaganda and interpret editorial cartoons.

Tasks: The learner will design a visual organizer depicting pros and cons of a current issue and will share, edit, critique, challenge, and improve pictorial interpretations.

At the end of the month, each teacher brings six samples of student work to a departmental meeting. The samples represent what the teacher considers to be two examples of the best work done by students, two examples of average work, and two examples of poor work. As a team, the teachers then search for ways to improve the work of the weaker students in each class.

This team approach has greatly reduced the natural tendency of teachers to resist outside "inspection" of student outcomes and has created an environment of trust and shared responsibility. Furthermore, with each success, staff find themselves willing to push a bit harder in subsequent months, so that we have a dual commitment to student success and increasingly higher standards.

These two goals – success for all students and high academic standards – often are regarded as mutually exclusive. Yet they must become the norm for American education if we are to remain competitive in the world economy. Achieving both goals simultaneously is no easy task, but the staff at Hamilton Terrace are fully committed to doing so. To achieve this end, we believe that our commitment to staff development has become a model with profound implications for educational reform throughout the nation.

Lessons Learned at Hamilton Terrace

Welfare reform is a problematic process and does not lend itself to easy solution. Essentially, two major impediments stand in the way of helping welfare recipients become economically independent. The first lies in the economic restructuring that is occurring nationally and internationally. As more and more nations compete in the international marketplace, such factors as cheaper wages and more business/government partnerships in foreign countries are attracting jobs away from America. Thus our domestic economy simply cannot accommodate large numbers of new workers. The recent dramatic downsizing of such corporate giants as IBM and General Motors illustrate this trend clearly, as does the general trouble facing American-owned airlines. There are now, and will be for the foreseeable future, fewer good jobs in America's marketplace.

Second, there is fierce competition in the United States for the good jobs that do exist. Many welfare recipients, for a variety of reasons, simply do not possess the social or academic skills to compete with the sons and daughters of the middle and upper-middle classes for these jobs. And this situation will not change so long as the schools that serve them continue to provide the inadequate education typical of America's urban centers. There are only six words, it is said, that a high school dropout needs to know: "Will you have fries with that?" In the very near future, this may also be true of the high school graduate.

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Indeed, welfare reform can work only if major changes occur in the macroeconomic policy of the United States. This is an issue over which schools have little, if any, influence. Nevertheless, education for the poor and minority populations of our country must improve if there is to be even a modicum of fairness in the distribution of jobs that are created. This will not come easily.

One of the most painful experiences we have undergone in the creation of Hamilton Terrace has been the resentment on the part of many of our professional colleagues, who argue that the resources available to our students should, instead, have been spent on students who show greater potential for academic and economic success. They do not honestly believe that welfare recipients stand any meaningful chance of changing their lives or making any important contributions to society.

Yet our students have shown that they can be successful, that they can reach high levels of academic accomplishment if given the opportunity and the support of dedicated professionals. One of our students recently told a newspaper reporter, "This school means the world to me. This is my second chance at an education I didn't get early on." Now employed in a full-time job as a resident manager of an apartment complex, this 45-year-old continues to attend classes, which do not conflict with her work schedule.

The real lesson of Hamilton Terrace is that the American Dream is not dead. There is hope for everyone in our country, no matter how impoverished her background may be. We are convinced that the work we are doing is preparing our students for the very difficult world into which they will graduate, and we sincerely desire a society in which every American has a meaningful and responsible role to play. As one student so powerfully expressed it:

"Hamilton Terrace teaches you responsibility. You are responsible for your own actions. You're treated as an adult; therefore, you are expected to act like an adult. It means that you can go anywhere in the world with your diploma and be highly respected. For some, it's a second chance; for others, it's a last chance."

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